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Market Brief - Sector

The Netherlands : A Five Step Guide to the Dutch Organic Food Market

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The Hague [NL1], NL

Step 1:

Select an importer

- L** Ensure that the importer has a solid distribution network in your target market. (It is difficult to sell the same branded item in both specialty stores and supermarkets as specialty stores typically delist a product once a supermarket chain begins to carry it.)
- L** Ensure that the importer is registered with Skal, which is the only inspection and certification organization approved to operate in the Netherlands. (Importer pays an annual fee of approximately \$750 to Skal.)

Step 2 :

Importer applies to LASER (the division within the Dutch Ministry of Agriculture responsible for granting import authorizations for organic foods) for an import authorization. The importer supplies the following information/documentation directly to LASER (or through Skal for a \$250 fee):

- L** the U.S. certifier's standards and operating manual;
- L** a declaration from the U.S. certifier that their standards are equivalent to EU standards
- L** proof that the U.S. certifier is accredited in accordance with EN45011 or ISO 65;
- L** a description of the products and specification sheet, if composed of more than one ingredient;
- L** the name and address of the U.S. certifier who will be signing the EU certification (required with each individual shipment); and,
- L** a certificate or statement from the U.S. certifier that the latest processor/farmer (if it is not the exporter) is certified at the same level as the exporter.

Note: LASER may request further documentation, for example, the latest inspection reports from the exporter, farmer or processor or a statement on registration or accreditation from the U.S. authorities.

Step 3:

LASER reviews the documentation to ensure all requirements are met and issues the import authorization.

- L This process may only take a few weeks if all the required documentation is submitted with the application from the importer or if a similar authorization has been granted recently. Alternatively, the entire process could take up to six months. (The process will be expedited if the U.S. certifier is one that LASER has worked with in the past.)
- L Under EU organic food regulations, all import authorizations are valid until the year 2002, although LASER can at any time require further documentation. LASER may withdraw the authorization if it can be proven that all the necessary requirements are no longer met.
- L If a U.S. company wants to export an additional product with different ingredients, another import authorization must be obtained. (It is therefore advisable to include all products potentially suitable for export in the initial application.) The Dutch importer must also apply for a new import authorization if either the U.S. certifier or the U.S. exporter of the product changes.

Step 4:

U.S. exporter receives order from the Dutch importer and ensures that the U.S. manufacturer has made all necessary product packaging and labeling changes.

- L Ensures that the product label is written in Dutch;
- L Ensures that the product packaging meets Dutch environmental regulations;
- L Ensures that the name of the Dutch importer is written on product packaging;
- L Ensures that the name of the U.S. exporter is written on the exterior packaging of the shipment;
- L Ensures that all labeling and packaging complies with EU legislation; and,
- L Considers placing the “Skal EKO” logo on product packaging (Use of this logo is critical in order to gain consumer recognition of the product as organic. In order to use this logo, the importer must be a member of Skal. In addition, Skal assesses a levy on sales that, depending on total sales, ranges between 0.2% and 0.9%.)

Step 5:

The U.S. exporter ships the product along with an invoice and an EU inspection certificate signed by the U.S. certifier. The invoice must state clearly that the product is organic and should include the following: the name of the exporting company, a description of the product, quantity, price, name of the U.S. certifier, lot number of product, source of product, and the name of the manufacturer.

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